

Our purpose is to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” and to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

“To continue speaking the truth in love,” “endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” “keeping the ordinance as delivered.”

“Thus saith the Lord, ‘stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the Old Paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest of your souls.’ (Jer. 6:16) “And they that be of Thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell in.” (Isa. 58:12).

VOL. XC

LEBANON, MISSOURI • APRIL, 2018

NO. 4

WE JUST LIVE IN A DIFFERENT TIME

By DAVID GRIFFIN

There are times in history when societal changes are so unexpected and far-reaching that many feel as though the earth has shifted under their feet. They are powerless to change the situation, so they feel bewilderment, which often leads them to question, doubt, or even abandon principles they once held without reservation. Our time seems to be just such a time. When one hears the “news of the day,” or receives shocking word about the actions of a friend or relative, when one learns of church members leaving the faith to pursue sins once unthinkable, or when one has lived long enough to see behaviors once considered socially unacceptable become commonplace and celebrated, the exasperated response is often, “Well, we just live in a different time.”

It is one thing to use this expression to communicate exasperation; it is another thing to use it as a justification for sin. Occasionally, this writer has even heard a church member or two use the expression to mean that because something is so widely practiced, we just need to recognize that times have changed and give up our former views. Some call it “getting on the right side of history.”

This point of view is rooted in the assumption that what is “socially acceptable” is the ultimate standard of right and wrong. It is thus futile, some might say, even counter-productive to go against the majority. However, if the Bible teaches anything it teaches that majority thinking does not establish truth. Even though the times change, some things never change. The Bible is full of stories about times when one might have brushed aside the significance of sin with the declaration-“Well, we just live in a different time.”

First, in the days of the Judges someone might have

made such a declaration. Judges 2:7 says, “So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord which He had done for Israel.” Thus, there were about two generations who served the Lord faithfully after the Israelites conquered the promised land. However, verse 10 says, “When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel.” This statement confirms that a whole society, even one based directly upon the law of God as was ancient Israel, can depart from earlier moral standards in only a single generation. The nation reached what seems to be the low point in this early period of their history with that now-famous assessment: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (17:6). This statement first appears in the middle of a story quite to the point.

A man named Micah, from the mountains of Ephraim, steals eleven-hundred shekels of silver from his mother, who then places a curse upon her stolen money, whereupon her son decides to return it. She says she dedicated this money to the Lord for her son “to make a carved image and a molded image.” After the silversmith manufactures the desired icons, Micah sets up a shrine in his house and hires first his own son, then a Levite from the land of Judah to serve as his personal domestic priest. Micah’s confidence in the Lord with in this arrangement is revealed in verse 13: “Now I know that the Lord will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest!”

Anyone familiar with the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy recognizes the absurdly convoluted thinking on the part of all parties involved in this little transaction. Hiring a silversmith to transform shekels into molded images to be setup in a domestic

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Single Subscription One Year \$15.00
Also On The Internet

Published Monthly by **Old Paths Advocate**, Lebanon, MO
A.C. Brockman, 2033 King James, Lebanon, MO 65536
periodical postage paid at Lebanon, MO 65536
Send Form 3579 to **Old Paths Advocate**
1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550.

All articles published in **Old Paths Advocate** contain the view of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors and publishers. If you have any questions, please direct them to the author listed at the heading of the article.

Editorial

EVADING RESPONSIBILITY

By JOHNNY ELMORE

It often seems to me that the older I grow, the more responsibilities I have, They occupy my waking thoughts, disturb my slumber and impinge upon moments of rest and relaxation, I find myself thinking along the lines by Elizabeth Allen:

Backward, turn backward, 0 time, in your flight.

Make me a child again just for tonight!

But time won't turn back-time can't turn back, The carefree days of childhood are gone forever. With maturity comes responsibilities, and there is no escape from our responsibilities, The famed Daniel Webster is reputed to have said that the most solemn subject ever to engage his thinking was the thought of responsibility and accountability to God.

Men and women have sought to evade responsibility in many ways, Some have resorted to drugs and alcohol. Some have retreated into madness. Others, like Adam and Eve of old, have tried to shift responsibility to others, Some of the religious, mental gymnastics I see appear to be another effort to evade responsibility.

HOLY SPIRIT GUIDANCE?

In a little religious journal which crosses my desk, a brother who went out from us writes about the textual problems of the Bible. That is, he dabbles with the matter only long enough to express his doubts about the reliability of the Biblical text and to cast aspersions upon the accuracy of the Bible. He takes no stand about the integrity of the Bible but finally gives us his "simple solution": "If we allow, the indwelling Holy Spirit of truth imparts the desired truth of God to us," Do you see a problem with that? Well, I certainly do! If the Bible is not reliable and accurate, how do we know those passages that deal with the Holy Spirit are properly translated? How do we know there is a Holy Spirit for that matter? Don't we realize that without the Bible, we would know nothing of God, Christ or the Holy Spirit? And, that we would know nothing of heaven or hell, or

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QUERIST COLUMN

By CLINT DE FRANCE

Question: What is the origin of aberrant sexual desires and gender confusion? Are people born with sexual desires and ideas about gender that are different from the Biblical model for human behavior?

Response: First, consider the Biblical model for human gender and sexuality. Jesus Christ said, “He who [created] at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’” (Matthew 19:4-5). According to Jesus, the author of our faith, and, we believe, the creator of the universe, gender is a matter of divine design and determined biologically. Furthermore, sexuality is governed by biology. Contrary to modern opinion, Jesus, in the aforementioned text, defined marriage as between one man and one woman and condemned all other sexual relationships as perversions of sexuality.

However, we are aware of many historic and modern departures from this model. At the forefront of our attention today is homosexuality, and what is called transgenderism, wherein persons identify with a gender different from what they are biologically. Beyond these, there are dozens of other ways in which men and women can “exchange the natural use for what is against nature” (Rom. 1:26). It should be noted that the Bible makes a distinction between the sin of homosexuality and the temptation of same-sex attraction (Lev. 20:18; James 1:15). This is true of all sin, sexual and otherwise. But the desire itself, in this case, is curious. Only a small portion of the human race ever feels sexual attraction to the same gender, and an even smaller number identifies with a different gender than that which they are by birth. So, for those who struggle with this confusion, and those who want to help the struggling, the question is often raised: from whence do these attractions and ideas come? Are people born with these issues? Do they consciously choose to have them? Or do they come by some other means?

I believe the Bible gives us the answer. Human beings are composed of three faculties, according to scripture: the body - our physical self, the mind - our psychological self, and the spirit - our moral self (1 Thess. 5:23).

These three faculties, while closely related, are distinct. The body and mind, in as much as it is connected to the organ of the brain, are brought about by procreation and related to the rest of the human family. Because of this, our bodies and minds are susceptible to the corruptions suffered by humanity because of sin (Rom. 5:12). However, the spirit does not come from our parents, nor from Adam and Eve, but directly from God (Zech. 12:1), and is as flawless and pure as God who gave it (Eccl. 12:7). Think how this impacts the issue at hand. There are people born with physical abnormalities and corruptions that effect gender and sexuality. Jesus said, “there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother’s womb” (Matt. 19:12), and we know of rare cases when a baby has ambiguous sexual features. It should be noted that scientifically this is very different from homosexuality and transgenderism, and there is no medical connection between those issues. This issue, sometimes called hermaphroditism or intersexuality, is medical, not moral. Then there are those who are born with emotional and mental problems, and sometimes those problems lead to aberrant sexual behavior or a lack of personal awareness on matters like gender, these are medical, not moral issues.

However, the spirit, the moral seat of a person, can have no birth defects. Every infant child is born pure and free from sin or vile affections (Ezek. 28:12-15). This should be evident from observation! Babies are not sexually aware, they have no sexual attractions - righteous or unrighteous - and they certainly are not sexually active! The idea of a person being born with same-sex attraction or an infant thinking they have been assigned the wrong gender is ludicrous, simply because a baby doesn’t have the intellectual capacity for such thoughts, nor the moral corruption to lend to them. Sexual identity and impulse does not fully develop until puberty. Prior to that time, the Bible teaches that a person is in a state of moral, intellectual, and physical development that equals innocence and unaccountability.

According to the Bible, that youthful period of our lives is also a time of “foolishness:” (Prov. 22:15) - a time when understanding is undeveloped - and it is the role of parents to ensure that children, during this stage of life, are educated in the right way. A little boy might foolishly act like a little girl, or vice versa: it is the responsibility of the child’s parents to give discipline, correction, and instruction. Some children do not receive this. This writer has seen little boys who wanted to carry a purse and wear girl’s shoes and their parents

encouraged it and thought it was cute. It should not be surprising, if that behavior was never corrected, that the child would grow into a confused adult.

Sometimes little children are abused and improperly educated about sexuality. When this happens, if there is no loving correction (which sometimes involves counseling), the child often grows into a confused adult. Christians should be cautious about using the word choice to describe same-sex attraction or gender confusion. For many people, this confusion reaches back to childhood, and as an adult, they do not remember making a choice to feel this way, and in fact they likely never did make such a conscious choice. The choice is in how, as an adult, you are going to deal with your desires.

Thus, aberrant sexual desires and gender confusion, like all worldly lusts, do not come by way of our birth, nor are they necessarily the result of a willful choice to feel a certain way, they are picked up along the way, acquired and learned, often early in childhood. If they linger with us into our adult years, they become our struggles in our effort to abstain from sin and practice righteousness. Our pure spirits do not long remain in that spotless condition because of the influences of this wicked and cursed world, but thanks be to God who offers us clarity in our confusion, and promises us forgiveness of sin and transformation by the renewing of our minds through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY - A DEVOUT MAN

By GREG GAY

In Acts 10 we are introduced to Cornelius, commonly known as the first Gentile convert to Christianity. His conversion is wonderful encouragement to all who demonstrate an ardent desire for a right relationship with God to trust that God's providence will provide opportunity for that to happen.

In addition, the scriptures reveal enough about Cornelius' character for us to see that he is an example for all men in the church to emulate in several key areas of life.

The scriptures that mention his personal characteristics are as follows: "There was a certain man in Caesarea

called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts 10: 1-2).

Others described him to the Apostle Peter in this way: "Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you." (Acts 10:22).

"And the following day they [Peter and others with him] entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together" (Acts 10: 24-27).

Cornelius said, "Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God" (Acts 10:45).

"Then Peter answered, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days" (Acts 10:46-48).

Please notice the following positive observations about Cornelius.

Cornelius worked to support his family. As a "Centurion," his work was to be a commander over 100 troops. This means he had a job that allowed him to support his family adequately as well as help others generously.

To work to support his own family and to be able to help others who are less fortunate is what Godly able-bodied men of sound minds are supposed to do. Paul wrote, "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need" (Ephesians 4:28 NKJV).

Any man who can work to support his own needs, or those of his family, but is unwilling to do so, is lazy,

a poor example to all, and a burden to someone. The church is not required to help Christians who refuse to help themselves. Paul wrote to Timothy, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8 NKJV). Neither is it right for those who refuse to do what they can to provide for themselves to turn to the church again and again for help.

Paul declared to our brethren at Thessalonica, "For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread" (1 Thessalonians 3:10-12 NKJV).

A man who can work, but does not, and places his family's support burden on his wife is abandoning the role God has assigned men from the time of the fall. It was to Adam that God said, "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread" (Genesis 3:19).

Though our work may be humble, it is honorable if we do it with all our might in our service to God. Paul wrote, "Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:22-24).

Cornelius was also a person of good influence among all races of people in his community. Even though there was great animosity between Jews and Gentiles during the centuries prior and in the early years of the church, Cornelius, a Gentile, had the respect of the Jews. This could not have happened easily or quickly.

Today, there is no room for racial prejudice in a Christian man's life. Paul declared to the philosophers of Athens, "And He [God] has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26).

Part of Peter's sermon to Cornelius and his friends included this fact, "In truth I perceive that God shows

no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:34-35 NKJV).

We are to give no one a reason to doubt our sincerity of being welcoming to all, regardless of economic status or ancestry, in the hope they too will hear the gospel, obey, and become our brothers and sisters in Christ. All Christians are to live in such a way that we earn the respect of those in the church and of those who are out of the church, if possible. Paul wrote, "But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing" (1 Thessalonians 4:10-12 NKJV). To "walk properly" can mean to live in such a way to be worthy of respect.

Our goal should be, even if accused of doing wrong, we know, and God knows it is not true. We then, can have a good conscience about such, even if we cannot prove our own innocence. Peter writes that our goal would be always, "having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed" (1 Peter 3:16 NKJV).

Cornelius was also a man of faith who constantly and consistently prayed to God, and only to God. While not a Jew, he nevertheless rejected all idolatry and did his best to serve the God of the Jews. In what he knew to do, he is described as a "devout" man. This word is only used by Luke and speaks of very special dedication. In his service, he approached God humbly, with "fear" rather than with any pride. He was ready and willing to humble himself before God and was eager to learn more about what he needed to do to have a right relationship with God.

It is amazing to read how he embraced the vision he was given about a messenger coming to see him to tell him the word of God. It appears that he did not know how to greet Peter, his guest. It is very noteworthy that this Centurion, a leader of men, and a leader in his community, met Peter with the greatest humility he could offer. The Bible says, "As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." And as he talked with him,

he went in and found many who had come together. Then he said to them, “You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:25-28).

It was within the character of Cornelius to invite his family and friends to a discussion and presentation about God. His faith was obviously practiced openly with his family and with his friends to the point that many were willing to gather to hear Peter’s sermon. We trust they were also among those who made the choice on that wonderful day to be baptized for the remission of their sins and to be added to the Lord’s church.

I believe it would have been part of the Apostle Peter’s preaching on that day, or very soon thereafter, to talk about how Christians have a greater master than any earthly rulers. His point would have been: even though Cornelius was loyal to the Roman emperor and was trusted as a leader over 100 men in the Roman Army, he was to have a greater allegiance as a Christian to the Lord God of Heaven and Earth.

What would this have meant for Cornelius? It would have meant he had to change jobs. No Christian could stay in the military, in any position that directs or performs violence and vengeance and obey God’s rules for his kingdom’s citizens: Paul wrote our brethren at Rome, the place where Cornelius and his troops were from (the Italian Band), to say: Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:17-21)

After all the prayer and devotion Cornelius displayed before becoming a Christian, there is no doubt that he was willing to do whatever he needed to do, change whatever he needed to change, to be forgiven of his sins, and become a faithful member of the Kingdom of God in the Lord’s church.

May we be as courageous as men in the Leadership role in our families and in the church. May we too be devout,

eager to do only that which God permits and demands, without wavering. Then, as we completely submit ourselves to our Role in our home, others will have our good example to follow as they make the commitment to be submissive to their assigned roles. 5109 Chicago Ave, Fair Oaks, CA 95628, gregorypgay@gmail.com

MEET BROTHER DAVID GRIFFIN



While many in the brotherhood have already met David it is my pleasure to reintroduce him as an evangelist of the Lord’s church. David became a member of the Lord’s body in Springfield, Missouri in 1984 at the age of 22. Soon after, under the leadership of Brother Irvin Barnes, he began giving lessons and has preached in various capacities ever since. From 1989 to 1996 David worked with the newly established congregation of Eldon, Missouri. It was during this time that he also helped establish a congregation in nearby Brumley. After leaving Eldon, David returned to Springfield, MO and completed a BS in English all the while maintaining an active role in preaching. David furthered his education by moving to Kansas City and completing a Master’s degree in Greek and Latin at the University of Kansas after which he served one year as an adjunct professor at UMKC. For several years David supported himself by working in the banking industry but continued to contemplate full time preaching. This desire was fulfilled when the Lee’s Summit congregation near Lebanon, MO recently asked him to enter full time evangelism. As with many, David admits he owes a lot of his training to Brother Irvin Barnes, who both baptized

him and helped him learn to study and preach. Over the years David has written extensively for the Christian's Expositor and his scholarship speaks for itself. Recently David has traveled with Duane Permenter assisting with the Lord's work in Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. I have been a close friend of David for over 30 years and no one is more qualified to preach than he. He brings to the table the bible knowledge, maturity, scholarship, and work experience that would aid any congregation in its development. David is also available to hold Gospel Meetings. I highly recommend this man for the work of the ministry and for the equipping of the saints (Eph 4:12).

Mike Criswell
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shrine with a paid Levite as curator demonstrates, not only a gross misunderstanding, but a clear departure from God's way as prescribed in His law. The mother, the son, the silversmith, the grandson, and the hireling Levite all act contrary to the will of Jehovah, despite their expressed intent to act "in the Lord's name" (v. 3). Some commentators interpret this story as a benign account of a mother and son innocently doing what they thought was right to serve Jehovah in an age of Bible ignorance. That may be true in part. But the author of Judges signals the reader that this circumstance is to be lamented not excused: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (17:6). This statement indeed indicates divine disapproval of the actions of the players in this story.

In some ways, the account reminds one of modern times. Today's generation is ready to advocate any belief or practice imaginable, in both morals and religion, christen it with the name "Christian," and insist God approves, just because they're nice people. It is those who criticize such beliefs who are labeled "haters," and called heartless critics, lacking Christian love and compassion for fellow human beings. Nonetheless, as in the days of the Judges, God has a standard, and departure from that standard, even when done in the name of the Lord, cannot be absolved with platitudes like, "Well, we just live in a different time." Second, in the days of Solomon's idolatry someone might have

made such a declaration.

1 Kings 11. It is now about hundred-fifty years after the Judges. Solomon is the nation's third king. The Lord blesses him and the nation. Solomon brings the nation to what is perhaps the highest status in its history. He even builds the first temple, the dwelling place of God in Jerusalem to replace the tabernacle. For the first time in the nation's history the worship of God has a permanent location and facility. But Solomon in all his God-given wealth and glory disobeys the Lord, taking many foreign women as wives who turn his heart from God (1 Kings 11:1,4).

Just a few short years after the great dedication ceremony in the newly built temple of Jehovah, Solomon, at the behest of these wives, establishes worship for Ashtoreth, Milcom, Chemosh, and Molech-gods and goddesses of the Sidonians, Ammonites, and Moabites. Unlike Micah before him, Solomon does not limit such worship to his own house but establishes "high places" in plain view east of Jerusalem for the cultic worship of these alien deities. Who would have thought that a nation that had come so far could fall so low so fast as in the last days of Solomon!

The modern mind might see Solomon's actions as just "going along to get along." It might even brush aside the harmful significance of it all by saying "We've never had a king endorse idolatry before, but we've had no national catastrophes, all seems well-we just live in a different time."

However, the Bible is clear that the Lord has a different view. "So, the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel... " Not only so, but in verse 11 the Lord says, "Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant." Eventually, the Lord does indeed take the kingdom from Solomon, and the Jewish people are permanently fractured and fraught with idolatry and tragedy for centuries to come. The two resultant Jewish kingdoms, North and South, are finally destroyed in stages, the north first by the Assyrians, the south last by the Babylonians-Jerusalem and its temple razed to the ground! The religious practices instituted by Solomon must be characterized as far more significant than the minimizing statement which is the title of this article would suggest.

Third, long after the kingdom is stripped from Solomon's sons and fractured into North and South, each having competing aims and antagonistic rulers, a king named Manasseh came to the throne of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. His father, Hezekiah, had been a good king who instituted many needed reforms in the land, essentially wiping out idolatry in Judah. But it is only temporary. One generation later, Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, becomes king and not only reinstates idolatry but brings its uses to greater depths than ever before in Judah.

He rebuilds the high places his father had destroyed, builds altars to Baal as commonly done in the more idolatrous Northern Kingdom, and worships all the host of heaven. Moreover, unlike his ancestor Solomon who confined his idolatry to the valley east of Jerusalem, Manasseh moves it right into the temple of Jehovah itself. "He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord" and "He even set a carved image of Asherah [a Canaanite goddess] in the house of the Lord" (2 Kg 21:5,7). Verse 6 declares: "Also he made his son pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritists and mediums." Among all Manasseh's outrages, the Lord's wrath is kindled most of all by Manasseh's making his "son pass through the fire." This expression is Old Testament language for "child sacrifice."

Child sacrifice was the ultimate provocation to the God of Israel. All the years of moral and religious decline culminate in the abominable practice of slaying innocent children in the cultic honor of satanic deities. This sin sets up the nation for its inevitable doom, despite all that might be attempted later to divert it. The Lord said, "Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations...I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down" (2 Kings 21:11,13). This pronouncement was fulfilled completely when in 586 BC Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian military minions rushed in; destroyed the temple, the city, the nation; and carried the people away as slaves to Babylon.

During the fifty-five years of Manasseh's rule, most of the nation followed him in his idolatrous crimes. His son King Amon continued his father's practices under his own reign. Fifty-five plus years is enough time for a whole people to become fully accustomed to things they once might have abhorred. As more than half a century

unfolds, many on-coming young adults would be too young to remember what it was like when Manasseh's father Hezekiah had "cleaned up" the nation. It seems possible that sometime during those five decades, an older person who could remember the days of Hezekiah, but had resigned himself to wide-spread idolatry, might have shrugged off everything in the "modern" age of Manasseh by saying: "Well, we just live in a different time." (see introduction and picture on page 6)

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man's origin, purpose or destiny? And if we rely upon the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit, which Spirit-led group do we allow to guide us and teach us? Are all the hundreds of religious groups led by the same Spirit, and does he lead them to believe all the contradictory doctrines? And if the Spirit still inspires men as' He did the apostles, why doesn't someone leap over all the problems of textual criticism and write his own Bible? Surely we can see that what appears so !'simple" is more complex than the responsibility to study and search the Scriptures which this brother seeks so desperately to avoid. Psychologists have long maintained that the notion of "getting the Holy Ghost" is the result of men trying to escape from personal responsibility. We cannot escape responsibility-we must come to terms with the hard questions and problems of life.

BIBLE STUDY

Another example of trying to evade responsibility is the alibi often heard: "I can't understand the Bible." Some people have told me, "I read the Bible but I just don't get anything out of it." I realize that some people read better than others, but I have also observed that some of the ones who make this objection have no trouble reading the stock market report, the sports page or something else in which they have a real interest. I say that men and women can read the Bible, yes, even the King James Version, and they can understand it. Paul said, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). Paul's exhortation would likely be to "give attendance to reading," because we are accountable, responsible beings and we cannot escape with such pitiful excuses. An older lady was asked why she read the Bible so much and she replied, "I'm afraid I may have missed something."

ELDERS

Attempts at evasion of responsibility frequently hinder the progress of the church and the gospel. Sometimes when congregations have been around fifty or sixty years people ask: "Why aren't there any elders in this congregation?" And the answer is so easy, isn't it? It rolls off our tongues so lightly. "We don't have anyone qualified." That is supposed to be the end of all controversy. But it isn't. Granted that there are no men qualified? Why aren't some efforts being made to have qualified men? Perhaps preachers, evangelists, leaders and members will all have to answer for this deficiency. And while I am on this topic, what about the responsibility of honest, Godfearing brethren to prepare themselves for such a work? And, what about the responsibility of our women to encourage their husbands to do this work and to keep themselves in such a way that they will not be the cause of his failure to qualify?

Many young men who could preach and serve evade this responsibility. Saints excuse themselves from the responsibility to win the lost and to be fervent in spirit, by saying that no one else is. Evangelists excuse themselves from the responsibility of declaring all the counsel of God by saying that no one else does. Does that excuse us from responsibility and accountability? No, it does not. I am still accountable. I will not be saved because of the neglect or meanness of others. I will not be saved because of the goodness and industry of my wife or brethren. I will not be saved unless I personally have lived a righteous life, and then it will be because of God's wonderful grace. Let us resolve that as painful as it is to face up to responsibility, we will do it because duty demands it. Paul said, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom. 14:12).



Our Departed

BRADFORD - Edith Marie Thompson Bradford departed this life December 16, 2017 at the age of 93, after an extended illness in Texarkana, Texas where she had been living for the last eleven years since moving here when Judy and I moved here to work with the church. Everybody at church loved her and she was always the first to run back and greet visitors to our assembly. She was a wonderful mother-in-law to me (she told everyone I was her third son) and a wonderful mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. She was so friendly and outgoing that she was given the title of Welcome Ambassador at the assisted living facility where she lived. They even gave her a badge with that title on it which she proudly wore. Marie was born in Troy, Texas on May 7, 1924. She married Wallace (Brad) Bradford on June 13, 1942, and he preceded her in death February 23, 1999. When they got married, Brad was not a member of the Church but she faithfully continued going to services. When the kids were born, she took the kids every Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday evening and to services during meetings. One Sunday morning Brad got up, took a shower and put on his suit and tie. Marie asked him where he was going. He replied, to church with you and the kids. Brad was baptized not too long after that and became a strong and faithful Christian man. Marie and Brad lived in Dallas before moving back to Belton and making McGregor their home congregation. As Wayne Mckamie said at her funeral you couldn't think of one without the other - it was always Brad and Marie. As noted above Marie moved to Texarkana when we moved here. Marie leaves to mourn her passing her sons, Bob Bradford, Bruce Bradford and wife Monica, and daughter Judy and husband Jerry Dickinson. She had 10 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren. Her grandfather was a preacher in the church of Christ in Temple, Texas and he built a pulpit for the church which Marie brought with her when she moved to Texarkana. We placed it in the entrance of our building and have our guest registry on it. I told all the grandchildren and great-grandchildren at the funeral about that and stressed what a great heritage they have. I told my grandchildren that their great-great-great-grandfather was a preacher in the Church of Christ. What a heritage that is! Everyone in Marie's personal family and in her church family miss her but we take confidence in the fact that she trusted in the Lord and lived her life for Him, and

therefore we plan to see she and Brad again in Heaven. There was a viewing and visitation here in Texarkana, and then Marie was taken back to Belton to be buried beside Brad in the Belton Cemetery. At the graveside service there was beautiful singing by all present and I spoke a few words before Wayne McKamie gave a beautiful eulogy and sermon. Thanks to all of you who have sent cards and messages of sympathy and love. We love you all. -Jerry Dickinson

YATES - Jacqueline Langley Yates, age 79, of Woodland, AL passed away September 7, 2017. She was my aunt and most of her family and friends called her "Jack". She is survived by her husband, Mac Yates of Woodland; one daughter, Alesia and Robert Woodard of Douglasville, GA; two sons, Chris Yates of Woodland and Alan and Patti Yates of Hiram, GA; 11 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; one sister, Narvell Duke of Hogansville, GA; and one brother, Noah Prince Langley of Carrollton, GA. She was preceded in death by her parents, Noah and Una Langley and 2 sisters. Jack was a native of Randolph county, AL and was born on July 10, 1938. She was a very generous person, an excellent cook, wife, and mother. She was a member of Napoleon Church of Christ and prior to retirement, Jack worked as the business manager for John Bleakley Ford. Her body was laid to rest at Napoleon Church of Christ Cemetery. It was my honor, as her nephew, to be able to offer words of comfort to the family at the gravesite. Ronnie Prince, an elder, from the Napoleon congregation, Benny Earl, a friend from work, and grandson, Brannon Woodard spoke at the memorial service. The Prince family provided the beautiful singing at the memorial service. -Rick Martin

Field Reports

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, March 13, old_paths@juno.com - The Livermore congregation is presently engaged in a gospel meeting with Cullen Smith who is doing a fine job preaching. We look forward to a profitable endeavor. Over the last few months we have rejoiced to witness at least 5 baptisms of adults and young people. The most recent was just last Wednesday evening. What a wonderful blessing that is. The congregation is working together in peace and harmony and to God goes the praise. We have a number of teachers who are capable and

we enjoy hearing them. The Philippine work is still growing, the work in Hawaii is also doing well and we just recently became involved in Australia. We pray for God's blessings in all the work everywhere. It has also been my pleasure to preach several times lately. Preachers, we need your field reports and articles by the 12th of the month, please. Thank you to all who have written for the paper. Pray for the work.

David Griffin, Lebanon, MO 65536, davidgriffin75@gmail.com, Feb 28 - As of August 2016, I began working with the Lee's Summit congregation near Lebanon, MO. This congregation has been active in rural Laclede county Missouri for the better part of a century and has much history associated with the origin and early history of the Old Paths Advocate. Many of the great Old-Time preachers were associated with this congregation long ago. I confess it is a bit humbling to reflect on that. The church is at peace and working actively for the furtherance of the gospel. It is a pleasure to be working with them. I am thankful to the elders and members of the congregation for providing many leads since I moved here and being helpful in contacting them. I have also been active in running any leads I receive through Bret Hickey and the television program. Currently, I am conducting studies with various members of the congregation and one with a non-member. We also look forward to our Spring meeting here with Johnny Elmore April 11-15, and I also look forward to being with the Stoney Point congregation in Kansas City, Kansas for a meeting April 27-29. May God bless all involved in the service of the Lord!

Kevin W. Presley, 108 Mulberry Court, Dothan, AL 36303, March 4, 2018 - The Lord is always good and has showered many blessings upon us in the new year. The year is already off to a busy start in television and meeting work. In January, it was a pleasure to be with the church in Lodi, CA. Large crowds gathered to worship and encourage the preaching of the gospel. My sincere thanks to Alan and Tonya Bonifay for their hospitality and good association through the week. May God bless their work. January also included a trip to Piedmont, AL to witness the ordination of Terry and Aaron Studdard as evangelists. Father and son are both reputable and highly capable men and I gladly recommend them both for meeting work throughout the land. In February, I enjoyed being near home with the church at Opp for a meeting. I conducted the first meeting in their new building 18 years ago and it was a joy to return for another effort. There are strong and

faithful families in this church and they are a bright star in the future of the church in Southeast Alabama. The next week took me to Grapevine, TX where the church is flourishing under its eldership and the work of preacher Matthew Barnes. We had tremendous crowds, wonderful singing, and I left revived and encouraged. Matthew is spearheading an online effort to reach people through bible correspondence courses and has seen a good deal of response. He has a good understanding of online media and how to effectively use it. This, in my opinion, is one of the keys to the future if we are to successfully reach the masses with the truth. The television work continues to progress. We are broadcast on five stations and are receiving regular response in the various markets and online. Each week it seems our online outreach of Let the Bible Speak grows and attracts new people. I appreciate those who share the broadcasts on your websites and social media accounts. It truly is an inexpensive and powerful way to present people with an opportunity to learn the truth. Please continue to pray for Brett Hickey, myself, and others who are working with new media to spread the gospel. Lord willing, I begin in New Salem, MS this mid-week and then to Birmingham, AL for the annual spring meeting March 25-April 1. Later, I plan to be in Fieldstone, MO (April 11-15); Miami, OK (April 18-22); Napoleon, AL (May 6-13); Columbus, GA (June 1-3); and Moore, OK (June 17-24). May God bless His people everywhere.

Michael W. Bolton, 903-491-6802, mwbolton2001@yahoo.com - We have been blessed to be able to traverse the state of WA, visiting with four congregations. I am happy to report faithfulness in each of them. We have also finalized our round trip to Asia for this summer. I am looking forward to the trip. I am feeling apprehensive because of the length of the trip as it is planned. We pray for doors to continue to open, and are thankful to be able to walk through the ones we have. We are thankful for the congregation at home who has patiently endured these many trips and that they are willing to begin to oversee these trips in the future.

CONGREGATIONALLY SPEAKING:

We continue to grow in spirit. Our studies in Judges have proven edifying and educational. We are planning to study the deliverer Ehad tonight (2/28). We were privileged to hear a wonderful study presented by Samuel Esparza (sp?) on the 9th. It was well translated. Then we enjoyed the hospitality of the Kenmore congregation that evening. We studied Revelation

18 with Pacific on the 10th. Alberto Lopez gave an excellent presentation in our skype study last Friday (the 23rd). It is such a joy to see new converts grow and begin to lead. We are thrilled to meet brother Winston Umakanth B, from Hyderabad, India. He is very well spoken of by the brethren there. I found him to be a pleasant, and knowledgeable man, with conviction. He will surely be a blessing to the PNW. We were blessed with Sky and Patsy Stevens moving to the area. They have already been a boon to the congregation. We did not have a special speaker this month. But that is alright as we plan on having special speakers often throughout the rest of the year. There is a spirit of excitement and love in Kennewick. We know that it is the workings of the spirit of peace and are thankful for all that is being done. It is wonderful to work with a congregation that is in peace and is working together in faithfulness. We look forward to days to come. At least part of the excitement comes from the tremendous growth in this region. The latest figures are close to 10% annually. The economy here is booming. Businesses are moving to the area and we hope this will be a benefit to the growth of the congregation. We were saddened with our brother Larry Briggs of the Yakima congregation with the loss of his wife of 40+ years. We are thankful though because he has been able to keep a great spirit through her long illness and death. Yours in Christ.

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

HEARING GOD WALK

By JERRY DICKINSON

I love to walk! I try to take a walk every day. It is good exercise, of course, but it is great therapy too. Walking is a great stress reliever and I am able to clear out my brain and think more clearly. Some of my best ideas for sermons come when I am walking alone and it is amazing how a sermon can just come together and crystalize as I stroll along and recall and contemplate passages from God's Word. It is as if I am walking with God- or more accurately walking with God's Word. We cannot see God, of course, but we can hear Him through His word.

I love to walk with God! God implored Abraham in Genesis 17:1, "Walk before me and be blameless." Genesis 5 :22 declares that Enoch walked with God. The word walk is a favorite of Paul's in the Ephesian letter. He beseeches in Ephesians 4:1, "Walk worthy of the calling with which you are called." In chapter 5:8 he declares, "For you were once in darkness, but now are you light in the Lord. Walk as children of light."

The word "walk" occurs 212 times in the Bible. Adding to that the various forms of walk such as walked, walking, etc. and the words occur 392 times. The Greek word most often translated walk in the New Testament is "peripateo". The word "peri" means around and the word "pateo" means walk, therefore "peripateo" literally means to walk around. You can tell a lot about a person by who they walk around with! The idea of the word "walk" as used in the Bible is the sphere of one's existence or manner of life. Paul is saying in the Ephesian letter that we are to show in our manner of life that we are not children of darkness but children of light. We are to live lives worthy of our calling as Christians. We are to walk with God through our relationship with Christ.

It is interesting that the first time the word walk, or actually walking, occurs in the Bible it refers to God. Genesis 3:8 says, "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Notice they heard His "voice" walking in the garden. Of course, this is figurative language because a voice cannot walk, but the idea is that God came and communed with Adam and Eve in the garden. They did not see the invisible God, but heard his voice. His voice walked with them and God communed with them in the Paradise He had created for them. There is something marvelously beautiful about walking with the voice of God sounding in your ear. As long as they listened and followed the voice - as long as they walked with God - Adam and Eve were safe and free and sinless. Soon, however as we know, they listened to another voice - the voice of the Devil - and they ceased to walk with God. They fell, and oh how great was that fall. We are suffering the effects even today of their failure to walk with God's voice!

Jesus came and walked among men so that he could redeem the world from the fall. He walked the road to Calvary and died so men could once again walk with the voice of God and have communion and fellowship with Heaven. When Mary went to the garden tomb and found the tomb empty she began weeping when suddenly she heard someone behind her walking. She turned and thought Jesus was the gardener until Jesus spoke her name and then she cried, "Rabboni!", recognizing the Lord. As God had walked in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve before the fall, Jesus walked with Mary in the garden after his victorious death and resurrection! C. Austin Miles put it in figurative language we have sung many times.

I come to the garden alone, While the dew is still on the roses:
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear, The Son of God discloses.
He speaks and the sound of His voice is so sweet the birds hush their singing,
And the melody that He gave to me, Within my heart is ringing.
And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own, And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.

We too can walk with the Lord and listen to his word! Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to reveal His word and they wrote it down for us so we can read it, memorize it, and thus take it with us even when we are walking around. Have you heard the voice of God walking lately? No? Why not take a walk with the voice of the Lord God and let his word as revealed in the Bible bring you into harmony and fellowship with Him? The Lord will walk with us if we will walk with Him. Beginning in this issue of the Old Paths Advocate I will be writing a new feature on the back page entitled WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE. My plan is to focus on men and women who walked with God and hopefully we will be inspired to follow the voice of the Lord as they did. Isn't it amazing and awesome that as God walked in the Garden of Eden in the beginning so that He could have fellowship with Adam and Eve, He wants to have fellowship with us as well. Even after this fellowship was broken by sin, God loved the world so much that He sent His only begotten Son so that we could be delivered from sin and be reconciled to our Creator. I look forward each month, Lord willing, to walking with you through the Bible and hearing the voice of God as he walks with us and talks with us through His word.